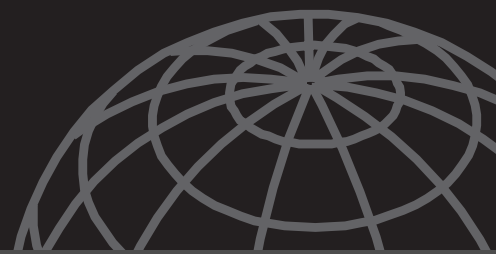




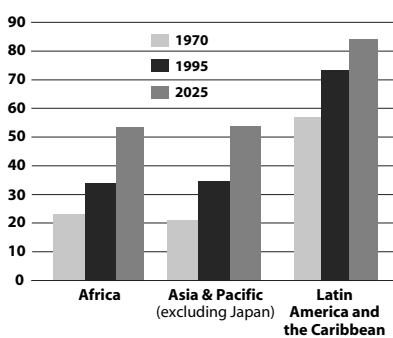
# Feeding the cities



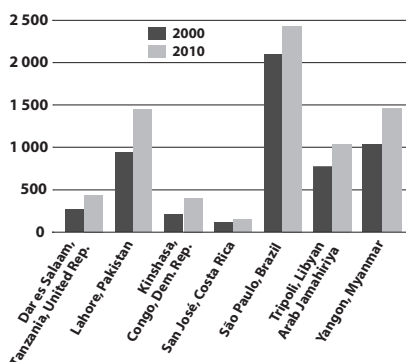
## KEY FACTS

- In Latin America and the Caribbean 75 percent of the population lives in cities; this figure will climb to 83 percent by 2030. Comparable figures for Asia and the Pacific are 37 and 53 percent; for Africa, 38 and 55 percent.
- Twenty cities now have a population of more than 10 million.
- In urban areas, people spend an average of 30 percent more on food than in rural areas but they consume fewer calories.
- Long distances, bad roads, poorly maintained trucks and urban crowding cause spoilage of 10 to 30 percent of produce in transit.
- City and suburban farms supply food to about 700 million city dwellers – one-quarter of the world's urban population.

Percentage of people living in cities ...



... and the food they will need



Net cereal consumption (thousands of tonnes).

**By 2005, over half the world's people will live in cities. Supplying them with safe and affordable food will strain the food supply and distribution chain to the breaking point. The difficulties of matching supply and demand and problems with transport, refrigeration and markets lead to losses and raise prices. Urban food production helps, but farmers lack sufficient land, water and knowledge. Experts from all sectors – transport, agriculture, nutrition and public health – are needed to ensure that enough safe, affordable, good-quality food reaches urban residents.**

## FEEDING AN INCREASINGLY URBAN WORLD

In 2000, 1.9 billion people lived in cities of the developing world; in 2030, the number will swell to nearly 3.9 billion. As cities grow in population and area, they require more extensive structures to bring food to consumers, including distribution systems and wholesale and retail markets. At the moment, markets in most of the developing world's cities are unplanned, which leads to environmental problems and increasing losses (see Getting food to people, *overleaf*).

Food security concerns are especially important in the developing world's cities, where poverty rates often exceed 50 percent: for example, Guatemala City (80 percent), Chittagong, Bangladesh (78 percent) and Kampala, Uganda (77 percent). Although poverty is still more likely to be rural, it is growing in urban areas. For example, the proportion of Brazil's poor living in cities rose from 39 percent in 1970

to 54 percent in 1990.

Urban poverty is not just found in capitals or megacities. Provincial centres of a few hundred thousand people can also have many poor inhabitants, and practical food supply and distribution problems.

Poor urban consumers:

- spend as much as 60 to 80 percent of their income on food, making them especially vulnerable to higher food prices, such as those caused by transport costs or monopolistic practices by powerful traders;
- are the last link in a long food chain, and have little choice of where to buy, increasing the risk that they will consume food of poor quality.

Food safety is a serious concern in urban areas, where poor handling and refrigeration and unscrupulous vendors can lead to contaminated or adulterated food.

## Streetfoods: a mixed blessing

Many urban residents obtain a significant portion of their diet from streetfoods: prepared meals or snacks sold cheaply on the street. Streetfoods are especially useful for the very poor, who lack time and facilities to cook, but office workers and other segments of society also rely on them.

Streetfoods are a significant source of employment, especially for women; are sometimes cheaper than cooking at home; and can be highly nutritious, as found in surveys in Indonesia and India. But vendors rarely have access to toilets or clean water and they lack training in hygienic food handling. Their unplanned stalls also obstruct traffic. Municipal authorities have a key role to play in making streetfoods safer and more efficiently organized.



Streetfood vendors in Sikasso, Mali.

## GETTING FOOD TO PEOPLE: A MODEL MARKETING SYSTEM

An efficient food supply and distribution system ensures that people have convenient access to a wide variety of high-quality, affordable foods, allowing a healthy diet. These are the key steps:

**Step 1:** Farmers have current market information and can match production to demand.

**Step 2:** Prices are posted at rural collection points, enabling farmers to sell their produce at a fair price to traders, who are in turn guaranteed a good supply.

**Step 3:** Traders' trucks reach urban wholesale markets quickly on good roads, avoiding wear and tear and traffic jams, and thus preventing costly losses.

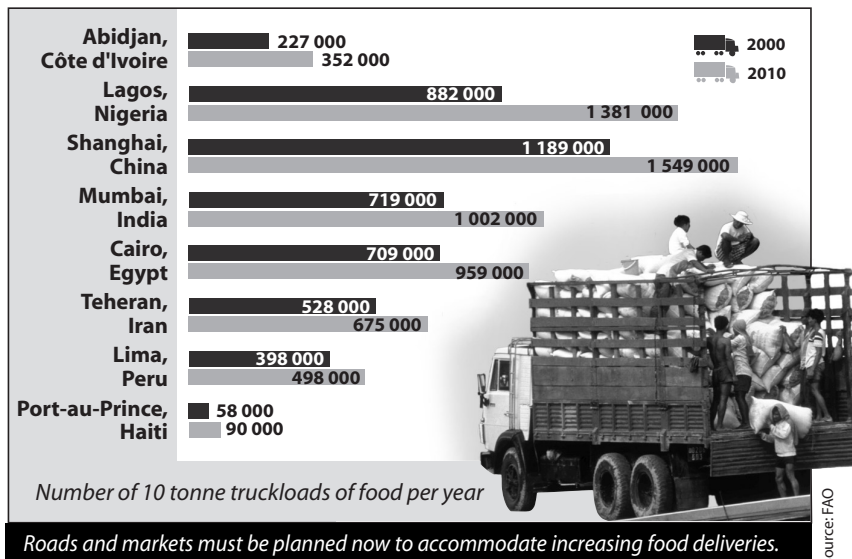
**Step 4:** Wholesale and retail markets are properly planned and supervised, with facilities for parking, unloading, weighing and packaging, and are equipped with toilets and clean water.

Markets should be planned – but this is not always possible. Indeed, when markets appear spontaneously at a site, it is usually because that is where they are needed. Where planning is possible, it should take place in consultation with traders and customers to ensure that markets respond to their needs.

### THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Urban authorities need to accept their responsibility for food production and distribution. They must:

- Involve transport planners, soil scientists, livestock specialists, nutritionists and public health professionals in urban planning.
- Design and locate markets in consultation with users and plan for minimal environmental impacts.
- Establish microcredit programmes for traders, including streetfood vendors, to finance improved hygiene and storage.
- Ensure that urban farmers have access to land, security of tenure, extension services, credit and assistance for purchasing seeds and other inputs.



### FACTS ABOUT URBAN FARMING

- About 200 million urban farmers worldwide supply food to 700 million people, growing crops in community gardens and on vacant lots, rooftops and any other open area they can find. Still more would farm if they had the space.
- Urban agriculture provides a number of major benefits, including income and employment, import substitution and environmental improvements such as protection of topsoil.
- In Asia, about half of urban households grow at least some food.
- Urban crops must be of low value (to discourage theft), grow quickly (because of uncertain land tenure) and be easy to grow (because of a lack of skills, inputs and tools), so it is not always possible to grow the most profitable crops.
- Since city authorities regard urban agriculture as backward, urban farmers often face political and regulatory obstacles, including harassment and confiscation of products.
- Health hazards can result from the use of wastewater and untreated human waste as fertilizer on crops. For example, in the years from 1985 to 1991, 45 to 70 percent of all typhoid cases in Santiago, Chile were attributable to wastewater irrigation.

### CASE STUDY HANOI'S UNPLANNED MARKETS

The experience of Hanoi, with a population of 5 million and growing, is a textbook example of the food challenge facing the cities of the developing world. Of Hanoi's five main wholesale food markets, one was planned; the rest evolved spontaneously, causing serious problems with traffic and food handling. As a result, 15 to 20 percent of produce spoils before it can be sold. Of the city's 104 slaughterhouses, 78 are in the city centre, operating in inadequate space with unsafe equipment and insufficient veterinary controls. Carcasses are usually displayed on the bare ground.

Food production in and around Hanoi provides 80 percent of the city's fresh vegetables and much of its meat and eggs, which saves on transport costs. But urban farmers in the developing world often do not know how to use pesticides, wastewater or fertilizer safely, and sometimes farm contaminated ground. A 1999 survey in Hanoi found that chicken meat contained very high antibiotic residues, DDT was often present in meat (and always in eggs), and meat and dairy products were badly contaminated by bacteria and heavy metals.

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